

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 NEAE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00
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FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
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INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM IMMEDIATE
USMISSION USUN
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 1096

JERUSALEM FOR USDEL

E. O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT IS EG XF
SUBJ: MORE ON ISRAELI OPINION ON SUSPENSION OF THE MIL TALKS

REF.: TEL AVIV 1028

1. SUMMARY: MOST ISRAELIS VIEW THE DECISION TO HOLD
OFF ON SENDING A DELEGATION TO THE CAIRO MILITARY TALKS
AS A REGRETTABLE BUT NECESSARY RESPONSE TO THE RECALL
OF THE EGYPTIAN DEL FROM JERUSALEM. THERE IS WIDE-
SPREAD EXPECTATION THAT, PROVIDED THE JERUSALEM-CAIRO
VERBAL ATTACKS SUBSIDE, THE SUSPENSION ORDER WILL BE
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LIFTED SOON. IT HAS BEEN REVEALED, HOWEVER, THAT SOME
MINISTERS WENT ALONG WITH THE DECISION WITH RELUCTANCE,
REFLECTING A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF DISCONTENT WITH BEGIN'S
HANDLING OF THE SITUATION. ALTHOUGH WEIZMAN WAS ONE OF
THE MINISTERS HAVING RESERVATIONS OVER THE POSTPONEMENT,
WHAT SOME ISRAELIS SEE AS SADAT'S ATTEMPT TO PLAY HIM
OFF AGAINST BEGIN AND DAYAN IS NOT GIVEN ANY CHANCE

TO SUCCEED. END SUMMARY

2. TALK IN THE KNESSET CORRIDORS AND RESTAURANT FOLLOWING BEGINS SPEECH LAST NIGHT (TEL AVIV 1030) CENTERED ON THE HOPE THAT A NEW LEAF COULD NOW BE TURNED IN THE PEACE EFFORT. THE ASSUMPTION WAS THAT BEGIN HAD MADE THE REPLY HE FELT WAS REQUIRED TO CAIRO'S CHARGES AND ALLEGED VILIFICATION AND HE WOULD NOW SEE THE SLATE AS CLEAN. ALIGNMENT AND DMC MKS, GENERALLY BORED BY BEGIN'S ADDRESS, WERE AT LEAST GRATEFUL THAT DAMAGE HAD BEEN KEPT TO A MINIMUM. THE GENERAL FEELING WAS, "IT COULD HAVE BEEN WORSE." LIKUD MKS, RELATIVELY SILENT ON THE QUALITY OF THE SPEECH, MAINTAINED THAT IT WAS RESTRAINED AND THAT BEGIN SHOULD BE APPLAUDED FOR HAVING AVOIDED FURTHER PROVOCATION.

3. WITH LAST NIGHT'S KNESSET DEBATE BEHIND THEM ISRAELI POLITICIANS LOOK FORWARD TO THE EARLY RESUMPTION OF THE MILITARY COMMITTEE DISCUSSIONS IN CAIRO, LIKUD AND MOST ALIGNMENT MKS VIEW THE CABINET'S DECISION ON JAN 22 NOT TO SEND THE ISRAELI DEL AT THIS TIME A REGRETTABLE NECESSITY IN THE LIGHT OF SADAT'S ACTION IN BREAKING OFF THE JERUSALEM POLITICAL TALKS. HOWEVER, THERE IS WIDE-SPREAD EXPECTATION THAT THE CABINET DECISION MEANS ONLY A TEMPORARY POSTPONEMENT. IF THE NEXT FEW DAYS PASS QUIETLY WITHOUT CONTRIBUTING TO THE TENSION BETWEEN

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JERUSALEM AND CAIRO, IT IS BELIEVED THAT NEXT SUNDAY'S CABINET SESSION MAY GIVE THE ISRAELI DELEGATION A GREEN LIGHT. (IT MIGHT EVEN COME SOONER.)

4. THERE ARE REPORTS THAT SEVERAL MINISTERS WERE, IN FACT, OUT OF SYMPATHY WITH THE CABINET'S STOP-ORDER TO THE ISRAELI DEL, IN SPITE OF THE CABINET'S REPORTED UNANIMOUS APPROVAL OF THE ACTION. THEY ARE THOUGHT TO REFLECT A FAIR AMOUNT OF SUB-SURFACE DISCONTENT IN VARIOUS SECTORS OF THE COALITION WITH BEGIN'S RECENT HANDLING OF PEACE EFFORTS (REFTEL). MUCH OF THE DMC AND A NUMBER OF LIBERAL PARTY LEADERS FEEL THAT BEGIN OVER-REACTS TO THE CRITICISM FROM CAIRO AND ALLOWS HIS EMOTIONS TO INTERFERE WITH STATECRAFT. IN A MEETING OF DMC MKS YESTERDAY, CRITICISM WAS REPORTEDLY DIRECTED AT DMC MINISTERS FOR SUPPORTING THE CABINET'S DECISION NOT TO RESUME MILITARY TALKS. ON THE DEFENSIVE BECAUSE THEY HAD BEEN TOLD BEFORE THE CABINET SESSION THAT MOST DMC ACTIVISTS FAVORED QUICK RESUMPTION OF THE MILITARY MEETING, THE MINISTERS CLAIMED THAT THEY HAD BEAT BACK A MORE EXTREME PROPOSAL TO MAKE RENEWAL OF THE MEETING IN CAIRO CONTINGENT ON A RESUMPTION OF THE POLITICAL COMMITTEE TALKS.

5. MEANWHILE, DEFENSE MINISTER WEIZMAN'S DECISION TO POSTPONE HIS WASHINGTON TRIP IN ORDER TO REMAIN AVAILABLE FOR THE CAIRO TALKS WAS REPORTED IN TODAY'S PRESS. HE IS KNOWN TO HAVE BEEN ONE OF THE MINISTERS NOT KEEN ON SUSPENDING THE MILITARY DISCUSSIONS. HOWEVER, WEIZMAN IS TREADING CAREFULLY ON GROUND WHICH COULD BE POLITICALLY DANGEROUS FOR HIM. THERE IS INCREASING TALK AMONG ISRAELIS OF WHAT THEY SEE AS CAIRO'S ATTEMPT TO ENTER THE GAME OF ISRAEL'S CABINET POLITICS. THE THEORY MAKING THE ROUNDS IS THAT SADAT'S INTEREST IN WEIZMAN OWES LESS TO THE PUBLICIZED PERSONAL RAPPORT BETWEEN THE TWO THAN TO SADAT'S BELIEF THAT WEIZMAN IS MORE FLEXIBLE THAN BEGIN AND HAS THE BEST CHANCE OF ANY IN THE FIELD TO SUCCEED
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AS PRIME MINISTER. PERHAPS JUST AS IMPORTANT, ACCORDING TO ISRAELI OBSERVERS, EGYPTIANS SEE WEIZMAN AS LESS EXPERIENCED THAN BEGIN OR DAYAN AND MAY BE LESS POLITICALLY ASTUTE AS WELL. THESE IMPRESSIONS MIGHT EXPLAIN, AT LEAST IN PART, EGYPT'S PREFERENCE FOR THE MILITARY TALKS, WHERE THEY WILL HAVE WEIZMAN TO THEMSELVES IN CAIRO, OVER THE POLITICAL TALKS, WHERE DAYAN HOLDS SWAY IN JERUSALEM. ALL ISRAELIS WITH WHOM WE HAVE DISCUSSED THIS THEORY ARE CONVINCED THAT EGYPT'S ATTEMPT TO DRIVE THIS WEDGE AND BENEFIT THEREFROM WILL FAIL. WE WOULD BE INTERESTED IN CAIRO'S REACTION TO THIS ANALYSIS. LEWIS

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